# "Singing in the rain": The effect of perspective taking on music preferences as mood management strategies

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by

Colleen Katherine Carr

The Ohio State University

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Project Advisor: Dr. Marilynn B. Brewer, Department of Psychology

## ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between the first-person (1P) and third-person (3P) perspective and subsequent music selections when considering a sad scenario. 195 undergraduates at the Ohio State University read a sad scenario involving either a funeral or a sad movie from the 1P or 3P perspective, and then rated preferences for 16 genres of music. I predicted that the 3P perspective would result in little variance in rated music preferences, reflecting an implicit theory about the type of music sad people in general would prefer. In contrast, the music preferences in the 1P perspective should vary more, based on both the specific sad scenario presented (funeral or sad movie) and each participant's individual music preferences. As predicted, 3P preferences were stronger and showed less variance than 1P preferences, supporting our belief that people have implicit theories about responding to sadness. Participants did not, however, differentiate between types of sad scenarios in their music choices. Results for several specific genres of interest are also reported. Finally, theoretical implications and future directions are discussed.

# Singing in the rain: The effect of perspective taking on music preferences as mood management strategies.

*After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.*

Aldous Huxley, *Music at Night*

The point of view from which one construes or interprets an event (or person, for that matter) can have an impact on subsequent judgments. Research on such perspective taking has indicated that "putting yourself in someone else's shoes" when recalling an event (i.e. adopting the first-person perspective) leads to a decreased use of stereotypes (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Additionally, research has shown that the third-person (observer) perspective is associated with broader, more general construals of an event (Frank & Gilovich, 1989; Libby, Eibach, & Gilovich, 2005). The third-person perspective has been associated with both general construals and stereotyping, which is consistent with research showing that stereotyping has been linked with the use of more general, abstract *language* (Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, & Semin,1989). In general, then, one's judgments about another person or what that person might do is affected by the particular perspective one takes.

An interesting question, then, is whether or not an integration of research on perspective taking would offer insight into the domain of music preferences. That is, does perspective taking impact the type of music people choose or assume that other people choose? With the invention of the iPod and other portable music devices (some allowing for the storage of over 10,000 songs at one time), people across the globe are welcoming music into most every facet of their lives. No longer is music just a part of a car ride or a party; it is now an essential part of a 30-minute

run, leisure time at a coffeehouse, a short walk across a college campus and is, in many ways, an essential aspect of social self-presentation. The present research will examine how assumed music preferences are influenced by mood and perspective.

### *Music and Social Psychology*

Music and social psychology as a whole have seldom been linked. Yet, what little research has been done has provided a solid base for explaining why music is so important to so many people. Dollinger (1993) argued that people hold the general belief that their choice of music conveys important information about who they are. In addition, Rentfrow and Gosling (2006) suggest that a meaningful link exists between personality traits - particularly agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness - and music preferences. Clearly, not only is music a way of expressing oneself, it is also a way of connecting with like-minded others.

Research has also shown that music preferences are stereotyped. Rentfrow (under review) examined 14 different music genres and reported that stereotypes exist for fans of alternative, pop, rap, soul, religious, country, classical and jazz on a range of dimensions, such as drug and alcohol preferences, personality traits, and values. Although the stereotypes associated with alternative, pop, rap, and soul were not found to be valid, it is nonetheless important to note that they exist, and are no doubt used. Most everyone has a general idea in their head of what a typical country music fan or heavy metal music fan is like, even if these ideas are not necessarily accurate.

Links between music and mood states have also been shown to exist. According to Knobloch and Zillman (2002), after being induced into a “good,” “bad,” or “neutral” mood state, those participants in the “bad” mood prefer music that is higher in energy and sample fewer songs than those in the “good” or “neutral” mood. The researchers claim that the participants in

a “bad” mood are attempting to alleviate this negative mood, which explains their selection of highly energetic music and low sampling frequency. Why is it, then, that so often on television, in movies, and in everyday life, we can easily imagine individuals who are depressed, sad, or in generally bad moods listening to depressing, sad, low energy music? This discrepancy indicates that the first person perspective, and what we ourselves would do, may differ from what our implicit theories would suggest other people would do.

### *Mood Management*

It comes as no surprise that different mood states require different mood management techniques. Happy moods elicit very different subsequent actions than sad moods. Wegener and Petty (1994) demonstrated that subjects who were exposed to happy material expressed a higher preference for subsequent activities that were similar in valence whereas those exposed to depressing (sad) material wanted music of different valence. That is, happy and sad participants were *both* more likely to choose subsequent happy or uplifting activities, regardless of the emotional valence of the stimulus materials provided to them beforehand. This phenomenon is labeled the hedonic contingency hypothesis (HCH). However, the HCH may seem counterintuitive, given the readily available image that many people hold in their heads of depressed individuals wallowing in their misery.

In reality, people do differ in the strategies they use to manage their moods. The negative mood regulation (NMR) scale may help in understanding the discrepancy that exists between what the perceptions are of how other people manage their mood and what strategies are actually used to manage mood. Developed by Catanzaro and Mearns (1990), the NMR scale measures people’s expectations that certain behaviors or thoughts will help alleviate their negative mood states. Furthermore, people who score high on this measure are more likely to actively engage in

mood management strategies when in a negative state than those who score low on this measure. This may offer some insight as to why it appears that some people dwell on a negative mood while others engage in strategies to repair it.

### *Overview of the Present Research*

Historically, music has been especially important for people belonging to the college-age group (e.g., the importance of anti-war music in America during the Vietnam era). Holbrook and Schindler (1989) found that music preferences are established at around the age of 24 and are maintained throughout the remainder of one's life. Therefore, for the over fifty thousand undergraduate students at the Ohio State University (OSU), music plays a particularly important role in everyday life, and may play a role in mood management. The present research will attempt an integration of research on perspective taking and mood management strategies in the domain of music preferences.

Carr, Donahue, McClung, Scroggin, and Seiter (2006) found that after being instructed to construe a sad event from the third-person perspective, participants' subsequent music selections tended to converge more on one category of music (and thus, reflected an implicit theory about the music choices of sad people), whereas participants instructed to construe an event from the first-person perspective were more varied in their music selections. This difference in music selections from the first-person to the third-person perspective suggests that the third-person perspective elicits music selections relative to implicit theories about what people in general listen to, while the first-person perspective reflects what an individual actually prefers. One limitation of this early research was that participants in the first-person and in the third-person condition all read a single sad scenario. The present research investigates whether the type of sad scenario presented may affect the discrepancy between implicit theories and personal

preferences. One can imagine situations in which people would be motivated to either maintain their sadness (e.g., after the death of a loved one) or to repair this sad mood (e.g., after seeing a sad movie). The present research will investigate how manipulating the type of sad event may influence participants' actual music choices and their perception of the typical person's music choices as a result of perspective taking.

*Hypotheses.* The present research seeks to investigate the relationship between perspective taking and subsequent music selections when considering one of two possible sad scenarios. It was predicted that different mood management strategies would be employed by the participants as a function of the scenario that they were provided. Specifically, I predicted that the funeral scenario would evoke a tendency to choose music that would maintain the current mood state, whereas the sad movie scenario would evoke a tendency to choose music that would repair or improve mood. This relationship between scenario and type of music chosen was expected to be stronger when participants were making judgments from the third person perspective, which would reinforce the notion that there is a discrepancy between what the perceptions are about what sad people do and what people actually do when in a negative mood.

When assessing music preferences, we will use the taxonomy created by Rentfrow and Gosling (2003), who outlined four basic categories of music, each of which includes several specific genres of music. These four categories are reflective/complex music (blues, classical, folk, jazz), intense/rebellious music (alternative, heavy metal, rock), upbeat/conventional music (country, pop, religious, sound tracks), and energetic/rhythmic music (electronic/dance, rap/hip-hop, soul/funk). In addition the specific genres of music, silence, as indicated by the choice "would not listen to music," was included as an option as well.

I predicted that for both scenario conditions, participants' music selections in the third-

person perspective would converge on one style of music, depending on the scenario, and reflect an implicit theory about what music sad people in general in these situations would choose, whereas participant music selections made from the first-person perspective would be more varied. More specifically, I expected that participants in the third-person/funeral condition would rate reflective/complex genres as more likely, whereas participants in the third-person/sad movie condition would rate upbeat/conventional genres as more likely than participants in the first-person condition.

It is predicted that the first-person condition music preferences would show more variability overall than the third-person condition, due to the influence of individual differences in music preference, but on average choices would also be expected to vary by type of scenario. It is also possible that no significant patterns will emerge between scenarios for the first-person condition, due in part to the fact that participants may rely solely on personal music preferences when responding in the first-person, regardless of whether or not they are considering a sad movie or a funeral.

## *Method*

This study had a 3 (music category: upbeat/conventional, reflective/complex, silence) x 2 (perspective: first-person, third-person) x 2 (scenario: funeral, sad movie) mixed factorial design, with category as a within subjects factor and perspective and scenario as between subjects factors.

### *Participants*

195 undergraduate students at the Ohio State University participated in the present study. Participants were recruited in partial fulfillment of a requirement for an introductory psychology course using the Ohio State University REP program.

*Procedure*

Participants were first asked to rank their top three favorite genres from the list of 16 genres (low energy pop, sound tracks, rock, soul/funk, gospel, contemporary Christian, alternative, jazz, folk, blues, dance/electronica, upbeat pop, rap/hip-hop, country heavy metal, classical) in order to assess baseline music preferences. This was done in order to determine the unique effects of the scenarios and perspectives above and beyond our participants' general music preferences. That is, participants may not select music based on the emotional valence of the scenario, but rather based on their own individual preferences. Also, questions about how frequently the participants listen to music and how important music is to them were assessed using several questions and making Likert-scale ratings (i.e., "Indicate on the following scale, on average, how often you listen to music, *1=not very much, 7=very frequently*; Indicate on the following scale how important music is to you, *1=not very much, 7=very much*").

Participants were instructed that they would be participating in a study about the relationship between mood and music preferences. Participants were then instructed that they would read a scenario and would be randomly assigned to visualize that scenario in a certain way (either from a first-person or third-person perspective) beforehand. Participants first received instructions about perspective condition, either first-person or third-person.

> *First-Person Instructions: "Now we ask that you imagine yourself, and then read the following scenario involving you. While you are reading, please visualize the scenario* ***as though it were happening to YOU.***"
>
> *Third-Person Instructions: "Now we ask that you imagine a typical person, and then read the following scenario involving a typical person. While you are reading, please visualize the scenario* ***as though it were happening to A TYPICAL PERSON****."*

After participants read the perspective instructions, they read one of two possible

scenarios.

*First-Person/Funeral Instructions: "Imagine that you have just been to the funeral of a close loved one. You leave the funeral home, immediately get into your car and turn on some music. On the following scales, please rate how likely it would be that you would be listening to each genre of music, given this situation."*

*Third-Person/Funeral Instructions: "Imagine that the average person has just been to the funeral of a close loved one. The average person leaves the funeral home, immediately gets into their car and turns on some music. On the following scales, please rate how likely it would be that they would be listening to each genre of music, given this situation."*

*First-Person/Sad Move Instructions: "Imagine that you have just seen a sad movie in which a funeral has taken place. You leave the movie theatre, immediately get into your car and turn on some music. On the following scales, please rate how likely it would be that you would be listening to each genre of music, given this situation."*

*Third-Person/Sad Movie Instructions: "Imagine that the average person has just seen a sad movie in which a funeral has taken place. The average person leaves the movie theatre, immediately gets into their car and turns on some music. On the following scales, please rate how likely it would be that they would be listening to each genre of music, given this situation."*

These two scenarios were chosen because we wanted sad scenarios that would evoke different emotional responses. Specifically, the funeral scenario was selected because it offers both a situation in which a sad mood would be more likely to persist, and one in which most people would be likely to maintain their sad feelings. The sad movie scenario was developed because it offered a situation in which people would be in a somewhat sad mood, but one that they would be motivated to repair.

Participants were instructed to create a clear visualization of the scenario from the perspective they are assigned and were then asked to complete a series of questions relating to the scenario. Following the scenario, participants in the first-person condition rated how likely they would be and participants in the third-person condition rated how likely the average person would be to listen to 16 different genres of music immediately after the given situation (*1 = not at all likely* to *7 = extremely likely*). These genres were: classical, jazz, blues, folk, gospel, alternative, rock, heavy metal, country, upbeat pop, contemporary christian, sound tracks, rap/hip-hop, soul/funk, and dance/electronica. At the end of the questionnaire, participants also rated the likelihood of choosing silence.

Although the focus of this study is on the general beliefs that people have about what the preferences of other people are versus what they think they themselves would do under different conditions, participants were asked to complete the negative mood regulation (NMR) scale in order to allow us to explore whether individual differences influenced participant music ratings. Finally, the participants were asked to fill out personal demographic information (age, gender), as well as their current status as a student (major, rank). They were then fully debriefed regarding the purpose of the study.

## *Results*

The percentage of participants who chose each genre of music as their first, second, and third choice is reported in Table 1.

| **Genre** | **#1** | **#2** | **#3** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Low Energy Pop | 2.0 | 2.9 | 7.8 |
| Soundtracks | .5 | 3.4 | 5.4 |
| Rock | 27.5 | 20.8 | 9.8 |
| Soul/Funk | .5 | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| Gospel | .5 | 0 | 2.5 |
| Contemp. Christian | 2.0 | 2.9 | 2.0 |
| Alternative | 18.1 | 18.4 | 9.3 |
| Jazz | .5 | 1.5 | 2.0 |
| Folk | 0 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Blues | 0 | 0 | 1.5 |
| Dance/Electronica | 1.5 | 5.4 | 4.4 |
| Upbeat Pop | 7.8 | 10.8 | 14.2 |
| Rap/Hip-Hop | 14.0 | 17.2 | 19.6 |
| Country | 20.1 | 7.8 | 12.3 |
| Heavy Metal | 2.5 | 4.9 | 2.5 |
| Classical | 2.5 | .5 | 3.9 |

Table 1. Baseline Music Ratings, in %

Rock, country, and alternative were ranked as participants' top three favorite music genres, and blues and folk were ranked as the least favorite as no participants ranked either of these genres as their number one favorite.

I asked participants to indicate how often they listened to music on a 1 (not very much) to 7 (very frequently) scale. Participants' mean rating of the frequency with which they listen to music indicated that they listened to music a great deal (M = 6.34). I also asked participants to indicate how important music was to them on a 1 (not very much) to 7 (very much) scale. Participants' mean rating of the importance of music indicated that music is important to the population (M = 5.92).

In order to determine the judged likelihood of listening to each genre of music in each condition, I averaged ratings for each genre given by the participants in each of the four conditions. Figures 1 and 2 present the mean likelihood rating given to each genre in the first-

person/funeral condition and in the first-person/sad movie condition.

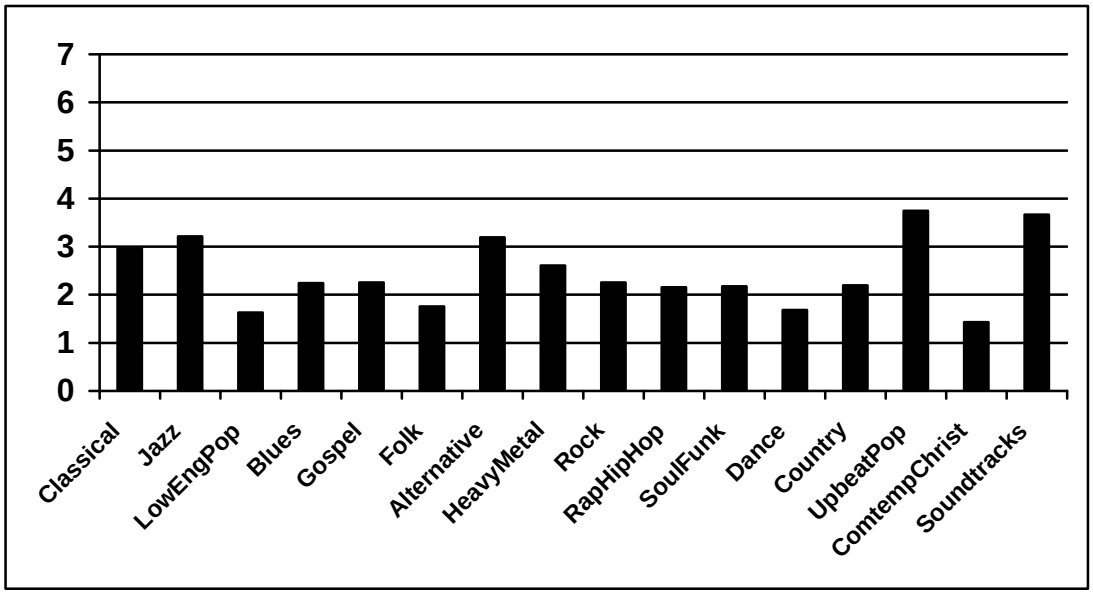


Figure 1. Mean Likelihood Ratings for First-Person/Funeral Condition

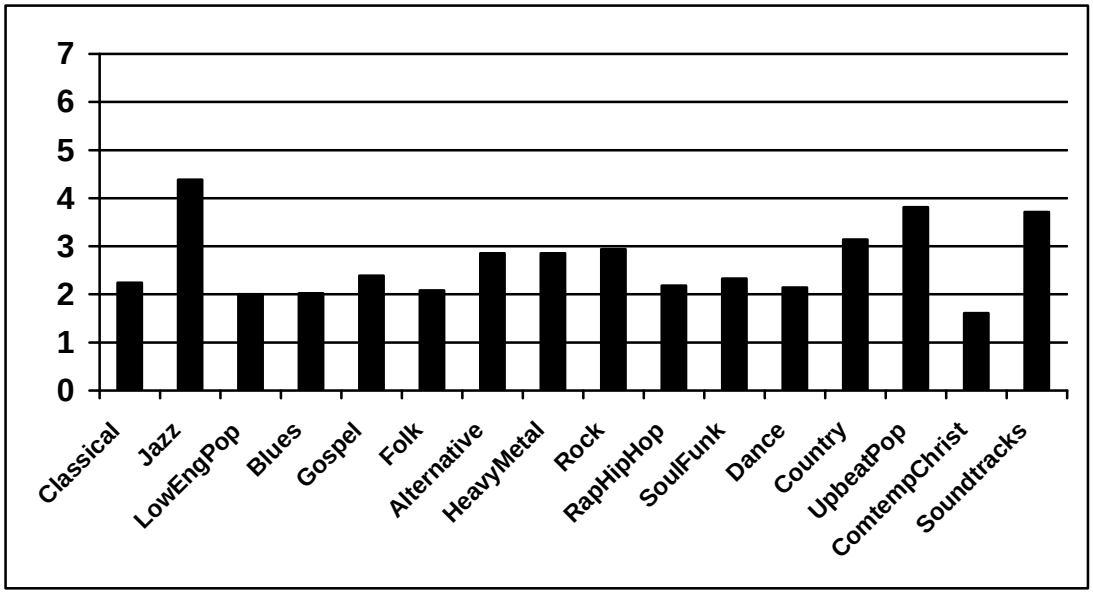


Figure 2. Mean Likelihood Ratings for First-Person/Sad Movie Condition

It is interesting that participants in these first-person perspective conditions rated “jazz” as a relatively high likelihood choice, even though jazz was rarely selected as a favorite form of music by the participants in this study.

Figures 3 and 4 present the mean likelihood ratings for each genre in the third person conditions.

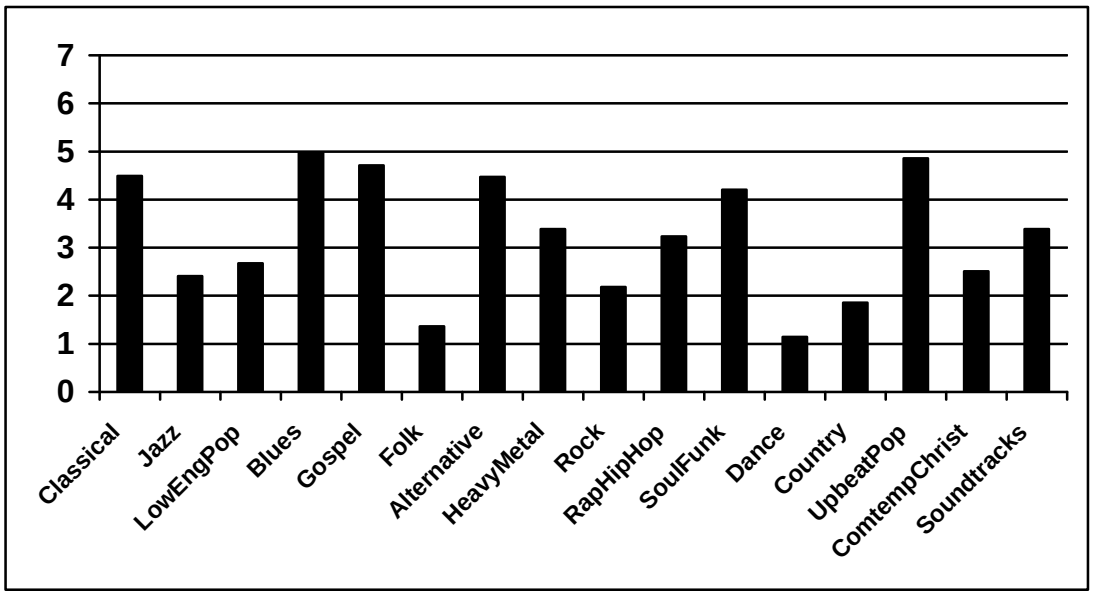


Figure 3. Mean Likelihood Ratings for Third-Person/Funeral Condition

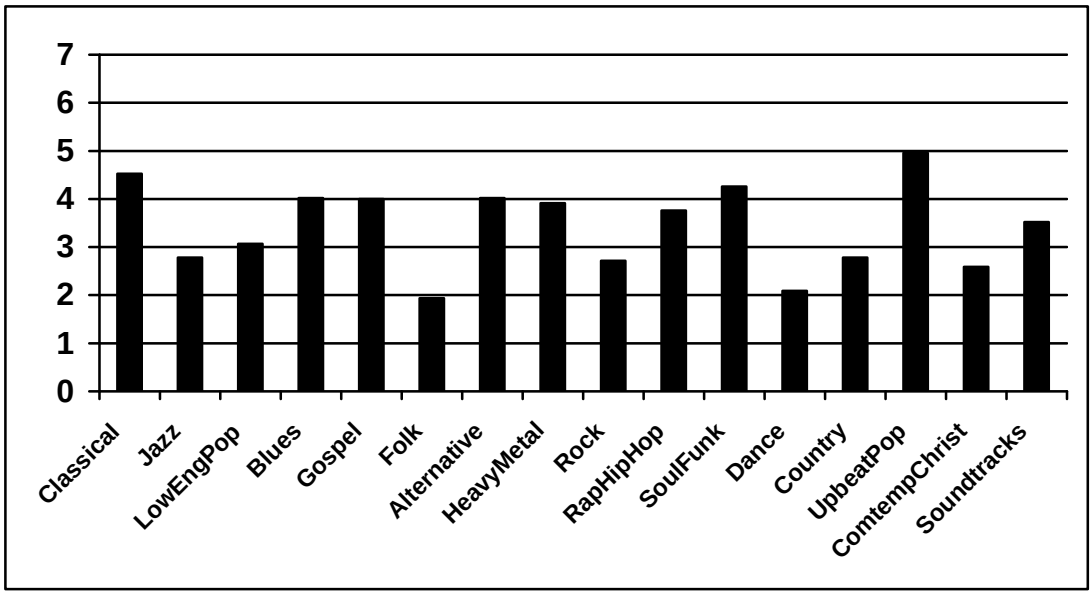


Figure 4. Mean Likelihood Ratings for Third-Person/Sad Movie Condition

*Statistical Comparisons Across Conditions*

The 16 music genres rated were collapsed in to four categories of music for the purposes of data analysis. The upbeat/conventional category included: country, upbeat pop, contemporary christian, and sound tracks. The intense/rebellious category included: alternative, rock, and heavy metal. The reflective/complex category included: classical, jazz, blues, folk, and gospel. The energetic/rhythmic category included: rap/hip-hop, soul/funk, and dance/electronica. Preliminary analyses showed that the intense/rebellious and energetic/rhythmic categories were rarely selected by participants. Participants did not see themselves or others as being particularly likely to listen to the music in either of these two categories after either a sad movie or a funeral. Because none of our primary hypotheses were based on these two categories, the intense/rebellious and energetic/rhythmic categories were omitted from subsequent analyses.

For the purposes of data analysis, the genres in the upbeat/conventional and

reflective/complex categories were examined because they included the genres that were most representative of the comparison category of most interest (e.g. low energy music vs. more upbeat music). For each category, we recorded the highest likelihood rating within the category; (i.e., the value of the genre rated the highest within the category, for each participant). Data analyses also include the likelihood rating given to silence. These highest likelihood ratings were analyzed using a 3 (category: reflective/complex, upbeat/conventional, silence) x 2 (perspective: first-person, third-person) x 2 (scenario: funeral, sad movie) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Contrary to my hypotheses, the three-way interaction was not significant, $F$ (2, 382) = 1.741, $p$ = .177.

There was a significant main effect of category, $F$ (2, 382) = 24.755, $p < .001$. Across all perspective and scenario conditions, participants rated silence as less likely (M = 4.438) than either some type of reflective/complex music (M = 5.391) or some type of upbeat/conventional music (M = 5.333). There was also a significant main effect of perspective, $F$ (1, 191) = 31.723, $p < .001$. Across scenarios, participants rated reflective/complex music, upbeat/conventional music, and silence, as more likely in the third-person (M = 5.449) than in the first-person (M = 4.659). However, these two main effects were qualified by a significant interaction of category and perspective, F (2, 1382) = 9.40, $p < .001$. This interaction seems to have been driven by participant responses for silence, which was the only thing that differed for each scenario, depending on the perspective condition (See Figure 5). Participants consistently rated silence as more likely in the third-person condition (M = 5.449) than in the first-person condition (M = 4.659), which did not occur for the two categories of music.

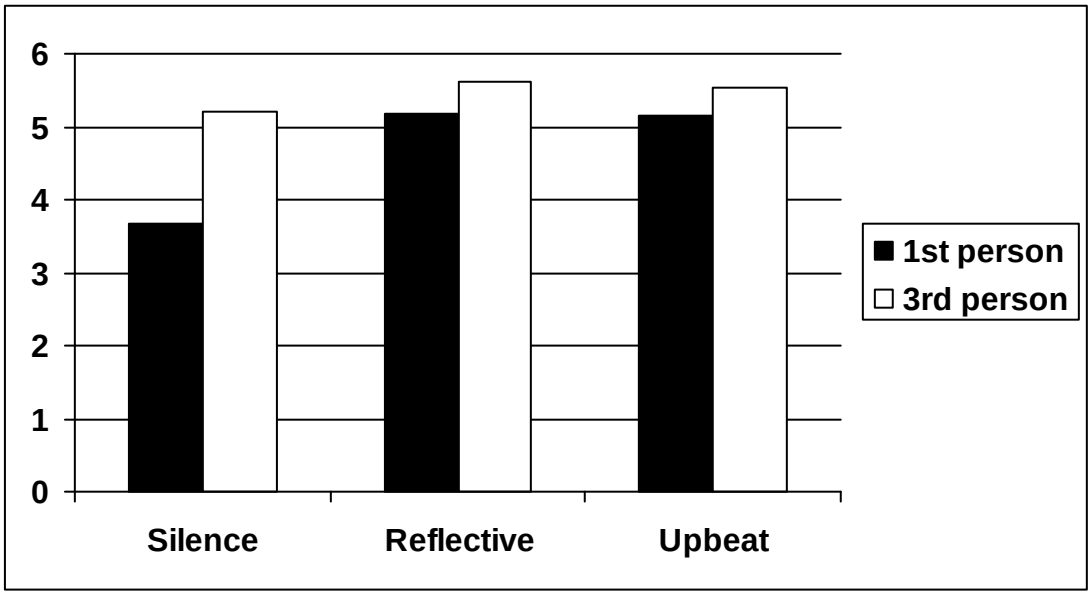


Figure 5. Category x Perspective Two-way Interaction

There was also a significant main effect of scenario, $F$ (1, 191) = 8.723, p = .004. Across both perspective conditions, participants' likelihood ratings for reflective/complex music, upbeat/conventional music, and silence were greater after the funeral scenario (M = 5.261) than the sad movie scenario (M = 4.847). This main effect was qualified by a two-way interaction of category and scenario, F (2, 382) = 16.197, p < .001. Figure 6 shows the relationship between category and scenario. This interaction was also driven by silence, such that silence was rated as much more likely after the funeral scenario (M = 5.143) than the sad movie scenario (M = 3.734), which was not the case for the two categories of music.

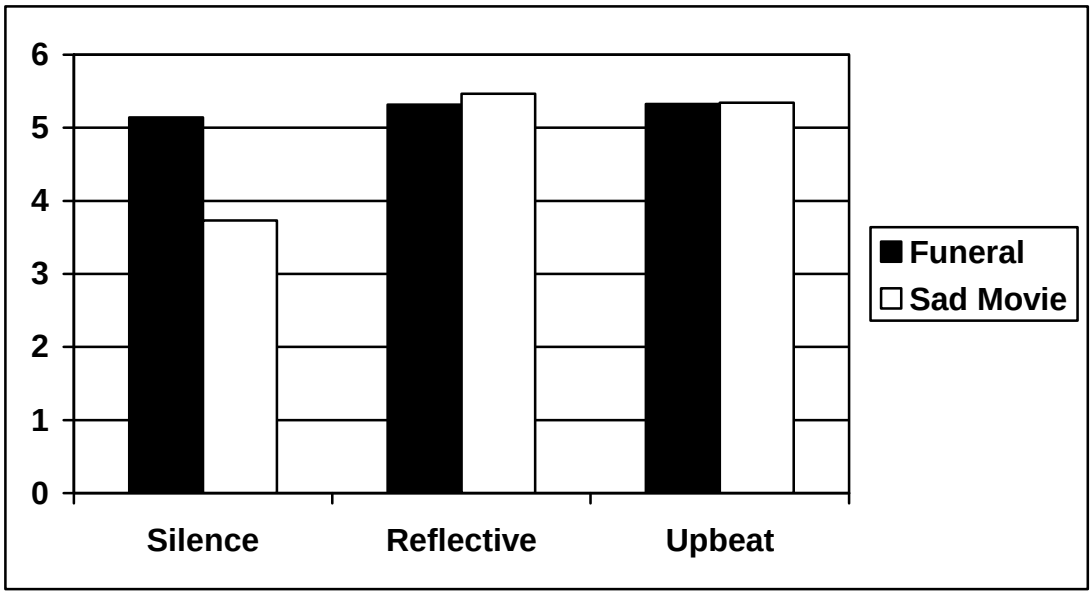


Figure 6. Category x Scenario Two-way Interaction

*Silence-only 2 x 2*

Although the initial three-way interaction did not reach significance, the two significant two-way interactions seem to have been driven by participants' ratings for silence. Because of this, data were subsequently analyzed using a 2 (perspective: first-person, third-person) x 2 (scenario: funeral, sad movie) between-subjects ANOVA for only the ratings of the likelihood of choosing silence, $F$ (1, 191) = .675, p = .412. Figure 7 shows the relationship between perspective and scenario for likelihoods of choosing silence. Although the two-way interaction was not significant, there was a significant main effect of perspective, $F$ (1, 191) = 27.230, p < .001. Participants across scenarios rated silence as more likely in the third-person perspective (M = 5.213) than in the first-person perspective (M = 3.664). There was also a significant main effect of scenario, $F$ (1, 191) = 22.524, p < .001. Participants across perspectives rated silence as more likely after the funeral scenario (M = 5.143) than the sad movie scenario (M = 3.734).

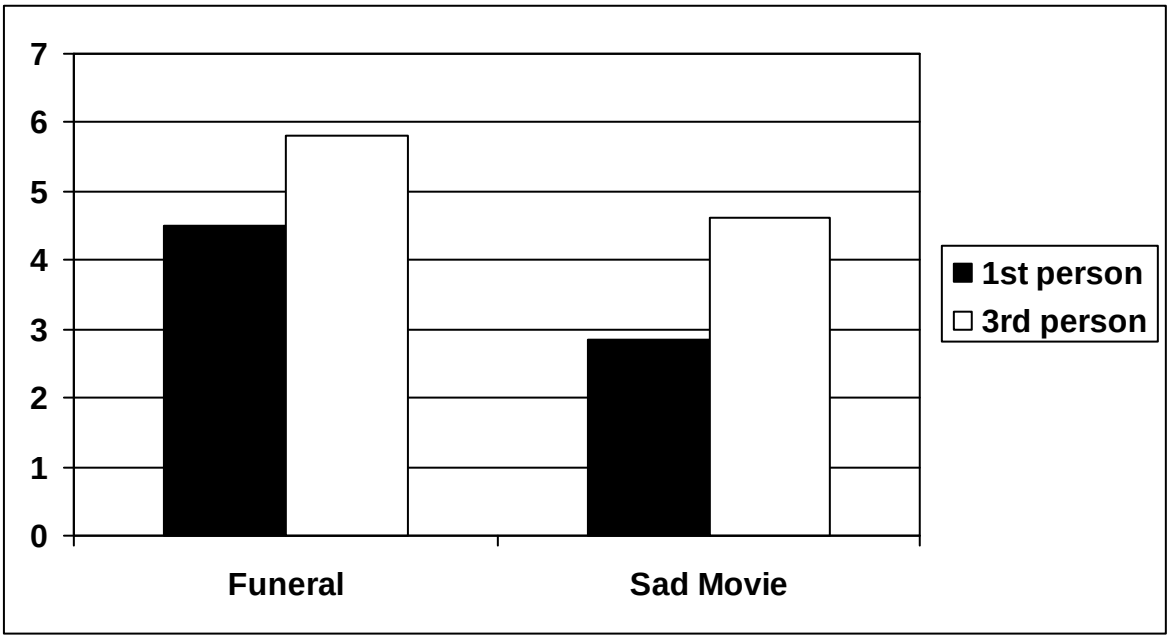


Figure 7. Scenario x Perspective for only Silence

*Perspective/Category Correlations*

We initially hypothesized that participants in the third-person perspective would show a tendency to converge on one or two categories of music, depending on the scenario. Although this effect was not found, participants in the third-person condition consistently rated categories of music as more likely to be listened to than participants in the first-person condition. This effect could be partially due to the nature of the measurement; when making likelihood ratings, it may be easier to imagine that other people might rate any genre as highly likely, whereas thoughts in the first-person condition will be more constrained by the participant's personal preferences. The bivariate correlation between the likelihood ratings for the upbeat/conventional category and the reflective/complex category was computed for participants in the third-person conditions, and the ratings of the two types of music proved to be positively

correlated, $r$ (95) = .359, $p < .001$. This correlation suggests that third-person ratings of music were unconstrained in that high ratings of upbeat types of music were not associated with low ratings of the opposite type of music. In contrast, it was expected that first-person correlations between the upbeat/conventional category and the reflective/complex category would not show this positive correlation because choices would be more constrained by the relative nature of individual preferences. The bivariate correlation between the two categories in the first-person perspective was not significantly different from .00 but did go in the expected negative direction, $r$ (100) = -.018, p = .860. In addition, there was a higher degree of variance in the value of ratings given in the first-person perspective (SD = 1.716) than in the third-person perspective (SD = 1.361). This difference in variance suggests that participants in the first-person condition had a greater range of likelihood ratings than participants in the third-person condition, which is consistent with the finding that third person ratings were overall higher for both types of music as well as for silence.

*NMR/Category Correlations*

For exploratory purposes, I computed the correlation between the individual difference measure (NMR) and music category likelihood ratings within each experimental condition. There were a few correlations of note between NMR scores and music category ratings. No significant correlations were found in the first-person condition for either scenario, which is surprising since I would have expected participants in this condition to reflect a tendency to engage in mood management strategies via music ratings when they were considering what they themselves would actually choose. However, some interesting trends did emerge in the third-person condition. For participants in the third-person/funeral condition, there was a marginally significant negative correlation between NMR score and ratings for the upbeat/conventional

category, $r$ (49) = -.249, p = .084. Thus, participants who are supposedly more likely to engage in mood management strategies when in a negative mood report that upbeat/conventional music would *not* be very likely for others to listen to after a funeral, perhaps because they assume it would not be an appropriate strategy to manage mood given the situation. The opposite effect was found for correlations between NMR scores and ratings for the upbeat/conventional category for participants in the third-person/sad movie condition $r$ (46) = .285, p = .055. This finding suggests that participants who are more aware of how to manage a negative mood feel that upbeat/conventional music would be *more* likely for others to choose after a sad movie. These findings indicate that there was some differentiation between sad scenarios occurring although it was at the level of individual differences.

*Specific Genre Findings*

While the majority of genres tended to reflect the general tendency for third-person likelihood ratings to be higher than first-person ratings, there were a few noteworthy genres that did not conform to this trend. (See Figures 1-4.) Rock music was most frequently rated as participants' favorite genre, with 27.5% of participants rating it as their number one choice. Although there was no significant main effect of perspective on likelihood ratings for rock music, $F$ (1, 191) = .437, p = .509, participants in the first-person condition rated rock as more likely (M = 2.597) than those in the third-person condition (M = 2.451), indicating that personal preference may have had an influence on ratings for this genre. Country music was also frequently rated as participants' favorite genre, with 20.1% of participants rating it as their number one choice. Country music showed a similar pattern as that found for rock music; the main effect of perspective did not reach significance for country music $F$ (1, 191) = 2.273, p = .133. Despite this, participants in the first-person condition rated country music as more likely

(M = 2.670) than those in the third-person condition (M = 2.32). This trend, like rock music, suggests that there may be an influence of personal preference on music choices for genres that are most popular.

Another interesting effect emerged for the genre of blues. Although no participants ranked blues as either their number one *or* number two favorite genre (and only 1.5% of participants rated it as their number three favorite), there was a significant main effect of perspective, $F$ (1, 191) = 83.376, $p < .001$. Participants in the third-person condition rated blues as more likely (M = 4.501) than those in the first-person condition (M = 2.206). This finding suggests that although blues was not particularly likely to be chosen as participants' favorite type of music, participants have implicit theories about how likely other people would be to listen to blues when sad.

### *Discussion*

In this study, we observed the effect of perspective taking on music preferences, specifically the way in which people may actively use music as a way to manage their mood. I predicted that participants' music selections in the third-person condition would reflect implicit theories about what people in general do in a sad mood. This hypothesis was not confirmed to the extent that I initially predicted. The finding that participants in the third-person condition consistently rated all examined musical categories, as well as silence, as more likely than those in the first-person condition suggests that if an implicit theory about the music choices of sad people exists, this theory may be less specific or differentiated than my initial hypothesis had predicted. The positive correlation between the third-person perspective and music ratings indicates that participants may have been uncertain about what others would listen to given the scenario, and hence were able to conceive of the genres as being equally as likely. For example,

when participants in the third-person condition were asked to rate the likelihood of listening to alternative, they may have been able to imagine somebody else listening to alternative music equally as easily as they were able to imagine somebody else listening to classical, thus the likelihood ratings for these two genres (and probably the rest of the genres as well) would have been similar.

I had originally predicted an interaction between music category, scenario, and perspective, such that participants would choose mood repair via upbeat music following the sad movie scenario and mood maintenance via low energy music following the funeral scenario and that this effect would be stronger in the third-person condition than in the first-person condition. This three-way interaction was not found to be significant, indicating that participants were not differentiating between reflective/complex music, upbeat/conventional music, and silence when considering the different scenarios. In subsequent analyses, I found that participants did not differentiate the categories of music depending on the scenario, but they did differentiate silence, although the differentiation of silence is not enough to make the three-way interaction significant. Correlations with NMR scores indicate that individual differences may have played a role in terms of the level of differentiation occurring between scenarios, in that participants in the third-person condition considered upbeat/conventional music to be much less likely for others to choose after a funeral and more likely for others to choose after a sad movie.

I was initially somewhat uncertain which direction the pattern of results for the first-person perspective would take. One possibility was that first-person participants would rely solely on their personal music preferences, thus no patterns of selecting music would emerge for these participants. However, this did not seem to be the case, as personal music preferences did not appear to completely explain music selections in the first-person condition for either

scenario. For example, if personal preferences did influence music selections, I would have expected participants to have only chosen rock music or country music, or at least to have them rated as significantly more likely than the other genres across scenarios. It was predicted that participants in the first-person condition would be higher in variance of ratings than participants in the third-person condition, which did turn out to be supported statistically, although it is unclear whether or not this effect was a result of selecting in accordance with personal preferences because the data for baseline music preferences was collected on a different scale than the music ratings after reading the scenario and clear within-subject analyses were not possible. Thus, participants actually may have been influenced by their own preferences, although it was in a subtle way that was not detected in the analyses performed. The specific genres of rock music and country music did show some general patterns that suggest that personal preferences may have exerted an influence on subsequent music selections after a sad scenario. These results must be interpreted with caution, however, because these effects failed to reach statistical significance.

*Limitations.* Several aspects of this study could potentially have limited its effectiveness and statistical power. The largest, most obvious possible limitation is the fact that there is no universal system for coding different types of music as belonging to one genre or the other, so participants may have had different ideas in their heads about what a certain genre of music includes. For example, soundtracks may invoke thoughts of happy music to some participants (e.g., the theme song to the movie *Footloose*) and they may invoke thoughts of sad music to other participants (e.g., the love song from the movie *Titanic*). Also, it could be that the scenarios provided were not descriptive enough to convey the intended mood state without actually inducing it. There are a multitude of different kinds of sad movies that may have

included a funeral, and likewise funerals are very different experiences depending on one's level of relationship with the departed. In addition, baseline music preferences were measured differently (rank order of top three favorite genres) than the likelihood ratings used in the study, which limited the ability to completely control for our participants' baseline music preferences. Finally, it is possible that participants may be engaging in mood management strategies outside of their conscious awareness *before* actually getting to the music rating task. For example, participants may have taken a moment after reading the scenario to think and cope with what they read, which means they would have already reacted to the scenario in the way which we were trying to capture via their music choices before the music rating task.

### *General Discussion*

Music is clearly an important part of day-to-day life, and this has been demonstrated widely in several fields including anthropology, biology, as well as cognitive psychology. However, music is not just an artifact of culture or a way to increase the level of endorphins in one's brain; it is also a critical element in the way we interact with others every day. Music is important to how we describe ourselves as people and how we define our culture. Recently, research on music and social psychology has strongly suggested that music preferences and choices have an important role in not only the way in which we see and define ourselves, but also in our expectation for the behavior of others.

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